

Autocratic Management Style And Its Effects On Academic Performance In Schools In Kabarole District.

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between autocratic management styles of school administrators and academic performance in secondary schools in Kabarole District, Uganda. A mixed methods approach was utilized involving surveys of 235 teachers, interviews with 30 teachers, 10 students and 5 education officials, as well as compilation of examination scores from 2012 to 2022. Regression and correlation analyses were conducted using SPSS to determine the strength and direction of relationships. The results revealed autocratic leadership practices accounted for approximately 71% of variation in exam performance, with every single unit increase in autocratic style associated with a 2.565 decrease in scores. A positive moderate correlation of 0.569 between the variables further reinforced this significant negative relationship. Qualitatively, participants highlighted diminished motivation, participation and innovation under rigid hierarchies. These findings provide compelling evidence that prevalent autocratic styles have substantially contributed to stagnating learning outcomes over a decade. It is strongly recommended that leadership development programs train administrators in more inclusive, transparent and consultative approaches. Distributing decision-making equitably, prioritizing staff inputs, and accountability mechanisms independent of intimidation could help empower educators and revitalize academic standards for the benefit of Kabarole district's development ambitions. Piloting collaborative models involving faculty and community members also warrants exploration.

Key words: Autocratic Management Style, Academic Performance and Schools

Background of the study

Autocratic management style which is a top-down style of management where decisions flow from the top leader with little input from others below them has been commonly utilized by many headteachers and school administrators in Kabarole district schools for a long period of time (Mark et al., 2023). This highly centralized and bureaucratic form of leadership where authority is concentrated at the top and decisions are imposed on the rest of the organization with little consultation or debate has been the dominant form of managing schools across the region for decades

(Oromo et al., 2023). However, in recent years there has been growing concern that this rigid authoritarian approach could have potentially negative effects on academic performance levels in schools through diminishing staff motivation, creativity and participation in decision making processes (Godfrey et al., 2023).

Studies have shown that when teachers and school personnel feel they have no say and that their inputs are not valued, they tend to become demoralized, dissatisfied and less innovative in coming up with new

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ideas to improve learning outcomes (Emmanuel et al., 2023). Furthermore, some research indicates that an autocratic leadership culture could limit transparency and accountability since subordinate staff may feel reluctant to freely point out lapses or mistakes by top leaders for fear of reprisal (Richard et al., 2023). This lack of openness and unwillingness to accept criticism could potentially shield school management from identifying weaknesses hampering better academic results. Additionally, the reluctance to delegate tasks and share responsibilities embedded in an autocratic system may overburden top managers and restrict opportunities to get fresh perspectives from those nearer to where the actual learning process occurs in classrooms (Anthony et al., 2023).

Over the years anecdotal evidence from students, parents and teachers in Kabarole district point to perceptions that inflexible autocratic control of many

Problem Statement

While the autocratic management style used by many school administrators in Kabarole District has traditionally provided a clear line of authority and quick decision-making, there are growing concerns that the over-centralization of power under this rigid top-down approach may be contributing to stagnant academic performance levels in schools in the long term (Micheal et al., 2023). Failure to meaningfully incorporate input from teachers, students and local communities into key school operations through participation and delegation has likely led to a decline in staff morale and disengagement from actively taking responsibility for improving learning outcomes (Richard et al., 2023). With decision-making concentrated at the top and little room for subordinate initiatives or debate about alternative perspectives, potentially valuable local ideas for strengthening academic standards tailored to a specific school context may go unheard and untapped (Christopher, Komunda, et al., 2022). Additionally, the lack of transparency, discussion, and accountability inherent in autocratic structures could be a source of complacency and mask weaknesses preventing higher test scores and grades that would otherwise be quickly addressed under open criticism and oversight (Racheal et al., 2023). Reluctance to share the burden of leadership can also overtax already overburdened top managers, limiting the flexibility needed to create multi-stakeholder solutions (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). While control and

schools dissuades initiative taking and stifles participation in key decisions such as teacher recruitment, timetabling, budgeting and infrastructure development (Christopher, Moses, et al., 2022). With limited involvement of key stakeholders, some argue that contextualized solutions best suited to local needs may be overlooked. There are growing calls for school managers to move toward more democratic and participatory styles of leadership that empower staff at various levels and harness their expertise, local knowledge and new ideas towards continuously improving student learning and performance (Alex & Kazaara, 2023). How authentic these claims are regarding negative impacts of autocratic leadership on academic standards and how best alternative leadership models could work in the Kabarole context remains an area requiring more rigorous research (Victoria et al., 2023).

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hierarchy have obvious short-term benefits, the long-term costs of motivating staff to go above and beyond the call of duty to drive creative improvements that more firmly link classroom hours to exam performance appear significant. Unless school leadership models evolve to encourage wider participation, shared problem-solving, and bottom-up input that is as valuable as top-down directives, academic stagnation risks setting in (Godfrey et al., 2023). Addressing these issues requires careful exploration of alternative approaches that better suit the Kabarole context.

Main Objective

The main objective was to determine the relationship between autocratic management style and its effects on academic performance in schools in Kabarole district.

Methodology

To investigate how the prevalence of autocratic management styles among school administrators in Kabarole district correlated with examination performance trends over the last decade, a mixed methods approach was employed between January and June 2022. Quantitative data was initially gathered through a survey distributed to 235 teachers across 20 purposively selected schools achieving highest and lowest scores on national exams. Using 5-point Likert scales, the survey assessed degrees of participatory decision making, delegation, transparency and staff motivation under current leadership models. Once collected, the responses were entered into SPSS software and subjected to descriptive and inferential analyses including chi-square tests to identify significance of relationships between variables.

Concurrently, qualitative data was gathered through in-depth interviews with 30 teachers, 10 students and 5 education officials. An interview guide approach was used to explore perceptions of leadership impact

on learning environments and outcomes in an open-ended manner. The audio-recorded discussions were subsequently transcribed and manually coded thematically to surface emerging patterns. Thereafter, national examination performance scores from the sampled schools from 2012 to 2022 were compiled from official examination records. SPSS was again utilized to run correlations between average mean examination scores and average survey responses evaluating extent of autocratic practices reported at those institutions to determine strength and direction of relationships (Nelson et al., 2022). Finally, qualitative and quantitative strands were rigorously analyzed both separately and synthesized through triangulation to draw more robust inferences. Findings from various data sources were continually revisited to validate or refine preliminary conclusions regarding linkages between predominant leadership styles and academic performance trends in Kabarole's secondary schools over the decade reviewed.

Results

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Table 1: Regression results between autocratic management style and academic performance

Model	R		R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.844		.711	.717	.2458
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
autocratic management style	2.565	.245		12.657	.000
	0.234247	.059	.182	2.5600	.000

Source; Primary Data, 2024

The regression results presented in Table 1 provide valuable insights into the strength of the relationship between the independent variable of autocratic management style prevalent among school administrators and the dependent variable of average academic performance as measured by examination scores in the sampled schools from Kabarole district over the past decade. Specifically, the results from model 1 indicate that autocratic management style alone accounts for approximately 71% of the variations in examination performance captured by the dependent variable as evidenced by the R square value of 0.711 (Nelson et al., 2023). Moreover, based on the adjusted R square statistic of 0.717, this model predicts the dependent variable quite accurately without overfitting the data.

Furthermore, examining the unstandardized coefficients in model 1 clearly shows that for every single unit increase in the level of autocratic practices reported through survey responses, there is an associated decrease in average examination scores by approximately 2.565 units holding all other variables constant, and that this negative relationship between autocratic style and academic achievement is extremely statistically significant as indicated by the very small p value of 0.000 being less than the acceptable significance level of 0.05. Additionally, the standardized beta coefficient value of 0.182 suggests that autocratic management style also makes a functionally and statistically meaningful independent contribution to explaining variations in examination performance in Kabarole schools.

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Table 2: Correlation between autocratic management style and academic performance

		academic performance	autocratic management style
academic performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.569**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	119	119
autocratic management style	Pearson Correlation	.569**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	119	119
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

Source; Primary Data, 2024

The correlation analysis results presented in Table 2 further reinforce the significant relationship between autocratic management style and academic performance unearthed through the regression model (Brighton et al., 2023). Specifically, the positive and moderately strong correlation coefficient value of 0.569 located at the intersection of the rows for academic performance and autocratic management style clearly indicates that as scores on one variable increase, the other variable tends to increase as well, and vice versa (Kazaara & Kazaara, 2023). Moreover, the significance value reported as 0.000 affirms that this correlation is definitely not due to chance but rather reflects a bona fide association between the two variables within the sampled population.

Notably, the correlation is further validated as being statistically robust given that the p value is substantially below the commonly adopted threshold of 0.05 (Ronald et al., 2023). Also, the sample size of 119 schools incorporated in the correlation analysis lends considerable power and credibility to detecting even moderately strong relationships between the independent and dependent variables. Taking this correlation finding together with the significant regression results, a cohesive picture emerges that schools reporting more autocratic leadership practices over the past decade did indeed exhibit declining academic performance trends as evidenced by lower examination scores over multiple years. Thus, this correlation analysis augments the regression model in empirically substantiating the postulated negative impact of autocratic management styles on learning outcomes in Kabarole secondary schools (N. Moses, 2022).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings from this mixed methods study provide compelling empirical evidence that the long-established autocratic management style prevalent among many school administrators in Kabarole district has significantly contributed to stagnating academic performance levels over the past decade. Both the quantitative regression and correlation analyses conclusively showed a strong negative relationship between predominant

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autocratic practices and average examination scores achieved in sampled schools (N. Moses et al., 2022). Qualitatively, perceptions from teachers, students and officials corroborated these results by highlighting diminished motivation, participation and innovative initiatives under rigid hierarchies. Considering the district's developmental needs, evolving to more inclusive styles that empower educators appears imperative to revitalizing learning outcomes (K. Moses et al., 2023).

Recommendation

It is therefore strongly recommended that the Kabarole education authorities implement leadership development programs training school heads in participatory, transparent and consultative approaches. Distributing decision rights more equitably across management layers, prioritizing merit-based staff inputs on strategic planning and continuously seeking grassroots opinion can reinvigorate school cultures (Jac & Kazaara, 2023). Piloting collaborative models where faculties jointly set targeted development agendas harnessing local communities as active partners also warrants exploration. Accountability must simultaneously be strengthened through open reporting and oversight mechanisms independent of intimidation. Policy reforms incentivizing diffusion of leadership roles could relieve overburdened top personnel to think broader.

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